

Message Text

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56

ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PC-01 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

AID-05 IO-13 OMB-01 SY-05 ACDA-07 OC-06 CCO-00 SAM-01

DHA-02 ORM-02 SCCT-01 USSS-00 /111 W
----- 089030

R 211140Z JUL 76

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4062

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

COMIDEASTFOR

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI

CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0571

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT ET

SUBJECT: EVENTS IN ERITREA: DISSIDENT MILITARY CONSPIRACY

APPARENTLY FIZZLES

REF: A. ASMARA 0551 (DTG 151350Z JUL 76), B. ADDIS ABABA 8117
(DTG 081444Z JUL 76)(NOTAL)

1. THERE ARE INCREASING INDICATIONS THAT THE REPORTED DISSIDENT
CONSPIRACY AMONG ETHIOPIAN MILITARY OFFICERS IN ASMARA, WHICH
ALLEGEDLY DEMANDED THAT THE DIRG STEP DOWN BY JULY 24, HAS FIZZLED.
MOST STRIKING ARE RELIABLE REPORTS THAT SEVERAL ETHIOPIAN OFFICERS
IN ASMARA HAVE BEEN ARRESTED FOR CONSPIRING AGAINST THE DIRG
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AND THAT ONE OFFICER, A LT. COL ABERRA, COMMITTED SUICIDE RATHER

THAN BE TAKEN PRISONER. THIS CLEARLY INDICATES THAT THE PRO-DIRG ELEMENT IS CONFIDENT THAT SUCH MOVES WILL NOT BE OPPOSED BY THE DISCONTENTS.

2. A FURTHER INDICATION OF THIS RENEWED CONFIDENCE AMONG DIRG SUPPORTERS IS THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF COL. FIKRU'S APPOINTMENT AS GETACHEW'S REPLACEMENT (ACCORDING TO THE VICE CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR, FIKRU WILL ARRIVE IN ASMARA THE WEEK OF JULY 26). THE ARRIVAL ON JULY 19 OF DIRG MEMBER MAJOR BERHANU, WHO IS THE HEAD OF THE "SPECIAL ERITREA REGION AFFAIRS COMMISSION" IS AN ADDITIONAL MEASURE OF DIRG STRENGTH HERE. THIS COMMISSION WAS ESTABLISHED JULY 7 BY THE PMAC WITH A MANDATE TO ASSIST IN THE REHABILITATION AND RESETTLEMENT OF ERITREAN REFUGEES. PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE COMMISSION ENJOYS CERTAIN EXTRAORDINARY POWERS (SEE REFTEL B.) WHICH WOULD MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR BERHANU TO ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SUDANESE WHICH MIGHT ULTIMATELY RESULT IN TALKS WITH THE INSURGENTS IN AN EFFORT TO RESOLVE THE ENTIRE ERITREAN PROBLEM. (ACCORDING TO ASS'T ADMINISTRATOR HIDAD KERAR, NO OTHER MEMBER HAS YET BEEN APPOINTED TO THE COMMISSION.)

3. ANY INITIATIVE BERHANU MAY UNDERTAKE IS LIKELY TO BE MORE PRODUCTIVE THAN THE CURRENT RITUALIZED MEETINGS BETWEEN THE COMMITTEE OF ERITREAN ELDERS AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF FIRST THE PLF, AND NOW THE ELF. (REFTEL A.). AT LEAST ONE MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE RETURNED TO ASMARA FROM KEREN YESTERDAY. INITIAL REPORTS INDICATE THAT THE RESULTS OF THE TALKS WERE EXTREMELY MEAGRE, WITH THE ELF STATING UNEQUIVOCALLY THAT EPMG ACCEPTANCE OF COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE FOR ERITREA WAS A NON-NEGOTIABLE PRE-CONDITION FOR TALKS. THE ELDERS ARE CARRYING A TERSE LETTER FROM THE ELF "ADMINISTRATOR OF KEREN PROVINCE", WHICH WILL PRESUMABLY BE DELIVERED TO THE NEW CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR FOR ERITREA, REJECTING ANY FORM OF AUTONOMY LESS THAN INDEPENDENCE. THE ELF REPS PARROTTED THE PLF LINE THAT ANY AGREEMENT ON ERITREA WOULD HAVE TO INCLUDE BOTH INSURGENT FACTIONS.

4. COMMENT: IT WOULD APPEAR FROM THE TIMING OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF FIKRU'S APPOINTMENT ON JULY 17, AND THE ARRIVAL OF BERHANU ON JULY 19, COMBINED WITH THE FAILURE OF THE PARATROOPERS MUTINY IN DEBRE ZEIT JULY 16, THAT THE TIDE HAD TURNED DECISIVELY
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AGAINST DISSIDENT ELEMENTS IN ASMARA AT LEAST BY JULY 14. THERE WAS NO VISIBLE SIGN OF THIS WATERSHED IN ASMARA, BUT IT IS NOW BECOMING CLEAR THAT DIRG SUPPORTERS HAVE REASSERTED THE CONTROL OF THE ADDIS GOVERNMENT ON ERITREA. ONE MIGHT EXPECT THAT AS THIS PROCESS CONTINUES, MORE OF THE OUTSPOKEN DISCONTENTED OFFICERS WILL BE PURGED.
SLUTZ

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW, MILITARY PERSONNEL, DISSIDENT FACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ASMARA00571
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760280-0913
From: ASMARA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760739/aaaabhib.tel
Line Count: 114
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 ASMARA 551, 76 ADDIS ABABA 8117
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18 FEB 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <18 FEB 2004 by morefirh>; APPROVED <09 SEP 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EVENTS IN ERITREA: DISSIDENT MILITARY CONSPIRACY APPARENTLY FIZZLES
TAGS: PINS, PINT, ET
To: STATE ADDIS ABABA
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006